

memorials in Europe few are as dignified;
 and had we
 read of it as a custom of ancient Rome, we
 should surely
 admire its sublime simplicity.

The trouble with the sublime from
 Homer's day to
 ours is that in man, unlike Nature, it has
 that proverbial
 first-cousinship to the ridiculous. 'Le sublime
 est si peu
 naturel': the sophisticated mind is slow to
 bow the knee,
 or breathe an 'O altitude!'. To beauty it may
 still sur-
 render open-armed: in sublimity it may sense
 a challenge,
 and be provoked. 'You dare not laugh at
 the Sphinx',
 cries Kinglake. And certainly of the sublimity
 of silence
 this oldest instance still remains the
 greatest. 'Abou el
 Houf, the Arab calls her—'the father of
 terror'. 'You
 dare not laugh at the Sphinx'? And yet I
 dare say that
 Horace or Montaigne or Voltaire would
 have dared to
 smile, even at her. For even she is, after all,
 only a monu-
 ment of the vanity, and the mad
 callousness, of man.
 But if even Solomon in all his glory is not
 safe amid his
 bodyguard from absurdity, at least the lilies
 of the field
 are. And that is not simply because
 humanity is more
 easily grotesque than Nature. The Alps
 have seemed
 hideous to generations: but I never heard of
 a race that
 mocked the rose. Certainly human things
 can far more
 easily and more often be beautiful or
 gracious or pathetic,
 than sublime: to tower beyond the reach of
 laughter is a
 privilege shared with Nature only by some

rare Michel-
angelo. Beauty is surer than sublimity. And
so, magni-
ficent as Silence has sometimes been in
human art and life,
it is more often as something gracious and
lovely that she
has won men's hearts. Above all, the poets
have felt her
spell; as if in their agelong struggle to break
with brief
music the stillness of eternity they had grown
in love with
their 'sweet enemy'. Sometimes it is for the
pure beauty
of her peace—the silence that is in the
starry sky, The